

P 041152Z FEB 02  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6573  
INFO NSC WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DIRONDCP WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 001025

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2007  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: PUBLIC PROTESTS GROW IN THE FACE OF FARC  
ATTACKS

REFS: A) BOGOTA 00918 B) BOGOTA 00879

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR ANNE W. PATTERSON FOR REASONS:  
1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: AS THE FARC'S WAVE OF VIOLENCE AND  
DESTRUCTION CONTINUES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, PRESIDENT  
PASTRANA MET WITH HIS TOP MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ADVISORS  
TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO COMBAT THE GUERRILLA ATTACKS.  
MEANWHILE, POPULAR ATTITUDES ARE HARDENING AGAINST THE  
FARC, AS PEOPLE TAKE TO THE STREETS TO PROTEST THE  
INDISCRIMINATE VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

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ATTACKS CONTINUE  
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12. (U) THE FARC'S WAVE OF VIOLENCE CONTINUES, DESPITE  
THE GROWING POPULAR CONDEMNATION OF THE GUERRILLA  
ATTACKS. ON JANUARY 30, THE FARC DETONATED A CAR BOMB  
BEHIND THE CARACOL TV AND RADIO BUILDING IN CENTRAL  
BOGOTA. NO ONE WAS HURT IN THE ATTACK, BUT SIX PEOPLE  
WERE KILLED AND 25 WERE INJURED IN FLORENCIA (CAQUETA  
DEPARTMENT) WHEN THE FARC ACTIVATED A BOMB WHILE A  
MILITARY CONVOY WAS PASSING BY. THEY ALSO EXPLODED TWO  
PACKAGE BOMBS IN FRONT OF THE ARMY'S 5TH MECHANIZED  
DIVISION BARRACKS IN MEDELLIN.

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NEW SECURITY MEASURES  
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13. (U) ON JANUARY 31, COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT ANDRES

PASTRANA HELD A SECURITY SUMMIT WITH HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL AND MILITARY OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS MEASURES TO COMBAT THE FARC OFFENSIVE. THE SUMMIT WAS ATTENDED BY INTERIOR MINISTER ARMANDO ESTRADA, JUSTICE MINISTER ROMULO GONZALEZ, VICE PRESIDENT AND DEFENSE MINISTER GUSTAVO BELL, ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL JORGE ENRIQUE MORA, NAVY COMMANDER ADMIRAL SOTO, POLICE DIRECTOR LUIS ERNESTO GILIBERT AND ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT OF SECURITY (DAS - FBI EQUIVALENT) DIRECTOR COLONEL GERMAN GUSTAVO JARAMILLO. SUBSEQUENTLY, PRESIDENT PASTRANA ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS IMPLEMENTING THE FOLLOWING SECURITY MEASURES:

- INSPECTION CHECKPOINTS AT THE ENTRANCES AND EXITS OF ALL CITIES;
- MOBILE CHECKPOINTS INSIDE THE CITIES;
- RAIDS OF SITES WHERE ATTACKS ARE BEING PLANNED; AND
- AN INCREASE OF FUNDS TO PAY INFORMANTS.

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GROWING PROTESTS  
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14. (U) THE NEW MEASURES WERE ANNOUNCED AS PUBLIC OPINION CONCERNING THE FARC'S TACTICS HAS TURNED STRONGLY AGAINST THE GUERRILLAS. ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, THE RESIDENTS OF META PROVINCE HELD A 15-MINUTE "POT-BANGING PROTEST" TO VOICE THEIR OBJECTION TO THE FARC'S RECENT ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE, WHILE BOGOTA MAYOR ANTANAS MOCKUS LED A SIMILAR PROTEST IN NORTHERN BOGOTA. THIS PROTEST FOLLOWED A THREE-MINUTE "LIGHTS-OUT" IN BOGOTA TO PROTEST THE FARC'S ATTACKS ON THE INFRASTRUCTURE, WHICH HAVE DESTROYED SCORES OF ELECTRICAL PYLONS AND HAVE DAMAGED A MAJOR WATER SUPPLY FOR THE CAPITAL.

15. (U) EVEN THOSE WHO STRONGLY SUPPORT THE PEACE PROCESS HAVE CONDEMNED THE FARC ATTACKS. INGRID BETANCOURT, AN INDEPENDENT "GREEN" PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE FARC AND CALLED ON THE GUERRILLAS TO CEASE THESE ATTACKS. ANDERS KOMPASS, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA, DESCRIBED THE ATTACKS AS "DEPLORABLE" AND "COUNTERPRODUCTIVE."

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MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS  
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16. (C) WHILE IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THE COLMIL HAS RE-DEPLOYED FROM ITS STAGING POINT OUTSIDE OF THE FARC'S SAFE HAVEN ("DESPEJE"), DAO REPORTS THAT THE COLAR'S 21ST BATTALION BASED IN GRANADA HAS BEEN DEFENDING KEY POPULATION CENTERS AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE REGION AROUND THE DESPEJE (REF B). THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCE (FUDRA) ALSO HAS BEEN CONDUCTING OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE FARC'S 26TH FRONT AND IS STILL FORWARD DEPLOYED IN META DEPARTMENT.

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COMMENT:  
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17. (C) ANALYSTS HAVE POSITED A NUMBER OF THEORIES ABOUT THE FARC'S ONGOING OFFENSIVE. SOME SENIOR MILITARY AND POLICE OFFICIALS HAVE POINTED OUT THAT THE FARC HAS MARKEDLY STEPPED UP ITS ATTACKS AROUND BOGOTA, SUGGESTING THAT THE GUERRILLAS MIGHT BE TRYING TO ISOLATE THE CAPITAL. MANY OBSERVERS ALSO BELIEVE THE FARC'S ACTIONS ARE MOTIVATED BY A DESIRE TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR MILITARY CAPABILITIES, APPARENTLY IN THE HOPES OF BOLSTERING THEIR LEVERAGE AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. ANOTHER THEORY IS THAT THE FARC IS STEPPING UP ITS ATTACKS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO DRAW COLMIL FORCES AWAY FROM THE DESPEJE -- IN EFFECT, FORCING THE

MILITARY TO LOOSEN THE SECURITY CONTROLS ON THE FARC  
SAFE HAVEN, SOMETHING THAT THE GOC HAD REFUSED TO DO IN  
THE NEGOTIATIONS. WHATEVER THEIR MOTIVES, THE FARC'S  
LATEST OFFENSIVE MIGHT BE A PYHRRIC VICTORY. WHILE  
THEIR ATTACKS HAVE HAD A PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON THE  
POPULACE (ESPECIALLY IN THE CITIES), THESE ACTIONS HAVE  
PRODUCED A POLITICAL REACTION THAT ULTIMATELY UNDERMINES  
THE FARC'S INTERESTS.

PATTERSON

=====CABLE ENDS=====